

Marines FROM THE TRENCHES

In this edition, *Marines* highlights stories about Marines on the home front and on the frontlines, gearing up for a war on terror. While the 13th MEU completes Maritime Special Purpose Force training, and 4th LAR hones their skills in technology, "Easy" Company and Marine Air Control Squadron 4 prepare to defend freedom abroad. And, as an added bonus, a Tennessee Marine tells how effort and determination turn dreams into reality.

13th MEU MSPF Courses on the Move

By Sgt. Mark P. Ledesma
MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif.

◀ **Marines from Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, conduct close-quarter battle exercises with live rounds at the 130 Range here, Dec. 10. The exercise is part of the training the Marines must undergo to be augmented into the 13th MEU's Maritime Special Purpose Force.**

Photo by Sgt. Mark P. Ledesma

exercise. This tests the combined skills of each element in the MSPF.

"The training is very tough," said Col. Michael R. Regner, commanding officer, 13th MEU. "The mountainous terrain in the local area will give the Marines a chance not just to be experts in weapons employment or communications capabilities, but also have advanced skills in land navigation and terrain analysis."

The training allows Marines to engage in missions such as deep reconnaissance, Hostage Rescue in an Urban Environment, Special Demolition Operations, Clandestine Recovery of Personnel and Equipment, Gas and Oil Platform Operations, Clandestine Reconnaissance and Surveillance, Direct Action and Close Quarters Battle and Maritime Interdiction Operations.

"The MSPF brings the capability of planning and executing special warfare missions that no other standard unit in the Marine Corps has the capability of conducting," said Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey A. Morin, 13th MEU.

According to the Marines who participated in the MSPF courses, the skills they learned are vital to their mission.

"Everyone should be able to go through this course," said 23-year-old Philadelphian Cpl. Clint K. Walker, team leader, 3rd Squad, 2nd Platoon, Company B, while going through the Security Element Course. "You never know what you might encounter in a battle." **M**

Dynamic Entry instructs selected Marines in special skills required to perform dynamic entry into a crisis site. The course includes classes in explosives, mechanical and thermal breaching techniques.

The Security Element course provides Marines lessons on how to secure an inner perimeter of a mission site, perform interior security duties for the assault element and conduct hostage handling. The Close Quarter Battle course teaches students planning and execution of deliberate and emergency assaults and CQB tactics and techniques.

Near the end of their MSPF training the Marines completed the Interoperability



In anticipation of its scheduled deployment, the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit's Maritime Special Purpose Force recently trained to prepare for possible missions it may encounter.

Courses the Marines completed during training include the Specialized Demolition, Dynamic Entry, Security Element, Close Quarters Battle and Interoperability courses.

The Specialized Demolition course covers training in advanced explosive techniques that will allow the selected Marines to conduct localized degradation or destruction on specific target sites.

Reserve LAR Marines Use Time and Technology to Hone Skills

By Sgt. John R. Lawson III;
QUANTICO, VA

Essential, but mundane aspects of readiness can devour a drill weekend and keep a reserve unit from training in the field.

But the Marines of Company D, 4th Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, recently managed to train in the field and tend to some necessary medical business, all in the same weekend.

The unit, which makes its home at Marine Corps Base Quantico, spent the first 18 hours of its January drill training with its light armored vehicles and practicing fire team movements.

Company D's commanding officer, Maj. Benjamin Busch, tells his Marines that they must always be ready to deploy to a forward combat area. "It has to be part of (our) mindsets at all times," he said.

After drawing weapons from the armory around midnight, the Marines packed themselves into their LAVs to practice night movement.

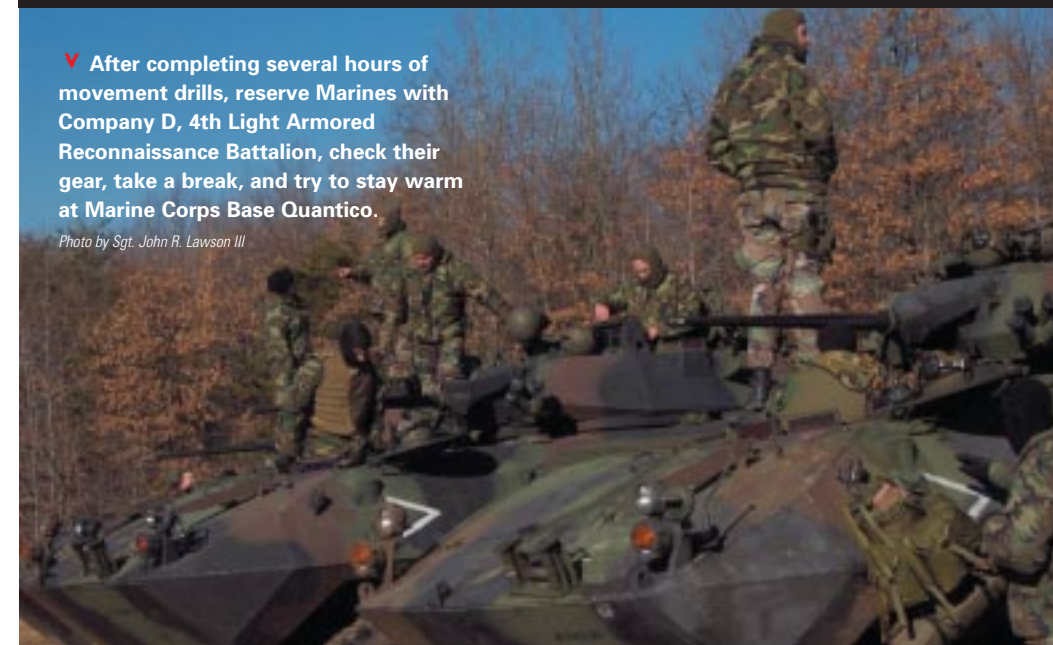
When training for tactical driving, the LAVs are "buttoned up," a term meaning that all hatches are closed. In daylight, the driver uses periscopes to see where he is going. But in the dark, the driver uses night-vision apparatuses, often called "fishbowls."

"Looking into the fishbowl to see where you're going takes some getting used to, but in many ways it's like playing a video game," said Lance Cpl. Shane Grizzle, who sells insurance when he isn't driving an LAV.

After a catching a few hours of sleep, the reconnaissance Marines woke at dawn to get some more training. The scouts went off to practice making and breaking contact with the enemy, while the crews

▼ **After completing several hours of movement drills, reserve Marines with Company D, 4th Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, check their gear, take a break, and try to stay warm at Marine Corps Base Quantico.**

Photo by Sgt. John R. Lawson III



took their LAVs to practice "bounding overwatch."

"Bounding overwatch is a lot like a fire team rush," said Staff Sgt. Troy Allen, who holds the billet of platoon sergeant for the company's first platoon. One LAV pauses and provides cover while another LAV advances. The LAVs take turns providing cover and moving until they have gotten where they need to go.

Allen, a contractor by trade, is a vehicle commander when he puts on his uniform.

"Because reservists drill only one weekend a month, and not always in the field, this particular training is precious," Allen said. "We don't have the luxury of doing this every day."

A typical LAV crew has a commander, a gunner, and a driver. These Marines must think and function as one, said Sgt. Mike Paigo. "The driver's primary function is to keep a steady and flat platform for the gunner."

◀ **A Light Armored Vehicle, of the reserve unit Company D, 4th Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, moves into position during training at Marine Corps Base Quantico.**

Photo by Sgt. John R. Lawson III



"Keeping a level LAV is crucial, but it isn't always easy on rough terrain," said Paigo, a police officer for the Department of Defense when he isn't serving the Corps.

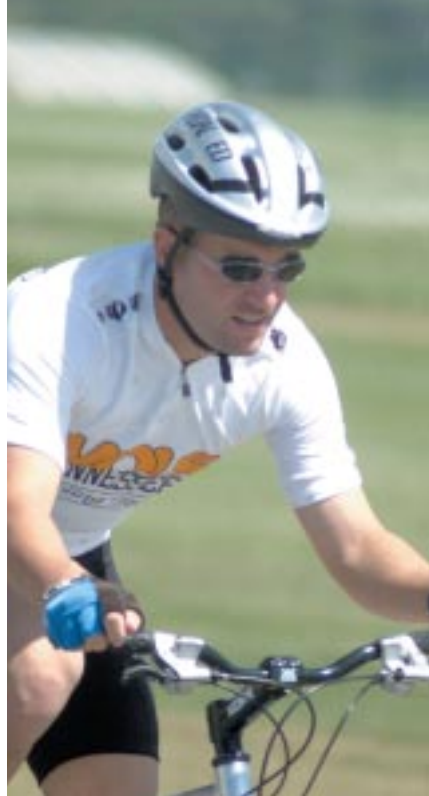
"The January drill was a great opportunity for the Marines to work on the skills central to their specialties," said Capt. William Langenheim, 1st platoon commander. "Everybody is working on their little piece of the pie."

Though the LAVs and scouts did a lot of independent work, communication between the two groups is critical. During this training, the LAVs were able to stay in contact with the scout teams thanks to a new batch of lightweight squad radios. Each squad radio runs on AA batteries and is the size of a cellular phone.

"Before the company got the squad radios, communication could get tricky," said Langenheim, who recently returned to reserve duty after spending time on active duty in Latin America. Sometimes runners were required to keep LAVs in touch with their scouts.

"Now communication will be much simpler," he said. "They work great; it makes all the difference in the world." **M**

"Because reservists drill one weekend a month, ... this particular training is precious."



◀ Richard Diezi rides through his daily cycling training at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

Photo by Cpl. Nathaniel C. LeBlanc

Since the dawn of time, man has continued to display his skills and physical strengths through various sporting events.

Today's athletes are no different from their ancient predecessors, as they continue to participate in more complex and challenging events such as triathlons.

The triathlon has become an event that has gained interest from a variety of competitors. This includes dedicated athletes and individuals looking for a new challenge in life.

Richard Diezi, a Marine sergeant assigned to Marine Tactical Air Command Squadron 18, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, as an aviation radio technician, is one of these dedicated athletes who has taken on the challenge of being a triathlete.

"I've competed in distance running and cycling since I was 16 years old," Diezi said. "I recently added swimming, because of the allure of participating in a triathlon."

As the 7th Annual Futenma Triathlon (a local triathlon sponsored by the Marine Corps) approached, Diezi jumped on the opportunity to participate in his first triathlon.

"One of my goals during my time here on Okinawa was to compete and finish one of the triathlons, and once I heard about the Futenma Triathlon, I knew this was my chance to put all my training together and complete one of those goals," said the Memphis, Tenn., native.

Diezi gained the experience he needed for triathlon competition by competing

on his college cycling team and participating in numerous marathons. Diezi's training and hard work paid off. He finished his first triathlon as the overall male winner in the mountain-bike division.

"My first triathlon was a great experience. I really enjoyed it, but this has been something that I've been working at for the majority of my life."

Diezi initially became hooked on biking at age 12, when he received his first 10-speed bicycle as a gift from his parents. From there, he eventually went on to join the cross-country and track teams during high school.

While in high school, he landed a part-time job with a bike shop, where he met other triathlon racers and also began to pick up sponsorships through the shop.

"The guys and I from the bike shop were like the pit crew for some of the big triathlons in Memphis, and it was around

that time that I started to see what triathlons were like firsthand."

Being a Marine has helped Diezi exceed his goals and set new standards. "My discipline as a Marine has helped me tremendously as an athlete," he added. "In college, whenever someone would ever mention the gym, the response was always like 'yeah right,' now physical training is part of my daily life." As a Marine, Diezi has pushed himself beyond expectations through his newfound discipline and dedication.

Through his motivation, Diezi hopes to continue inspiring others to go beyond their personal boundaries and "do the impossible."

"A lot of people think of marathons and triathlons as an impossibility for themselves," Diezi said. "By taking the time out, putting forth the effort and setting personal goals, anyone can make an impossibility into a possibility." **M**

Tennessee Marine Trods Path Less Travelled

By Cpl. Nathaniel C. LeBlanc
MARINE CORPS AIR STATION FUTENMA, Okinawa

▼ Richard Diezi, aviation radio technician, Marine Tactical Air Command Squadron 18, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, and Memphis, Tenn., native, splashes into his routine swim at the Futenma pool. The Marine sergeant is one of many dedicated athletes who have taken on the challenging lifestyle of being a triathlete.

Photo by Cpl. Nathaniel C. LeBlanc



'Easy' Company Supports CJTF-HOA

By Cpl. Paula M. Fitzgerald
CAMP LEMONIER, Djibouti

Life is anything but easy for "Easy" Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), which is here in support of Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa.

The unit was renamed "Easy Company," July 1, by battalion commander Lt. Col. W. Lee Miller, Jr. to honor the legacy and heroism of the Marines at the battle of Tarawa. Part of the company is carrying on the battalion "Warlord" tradition in the arid, African desert here, according to 1st Sgt. Ronald P. Andryshak, company first sergeant.

"We have a platoon reinforced," said Andryshak, of Goshen, N.Y. "Reinforced means we have Battalion Landing Team assets with us such as engineers from 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, and a Javelin section and sniper team from Weapons Company."

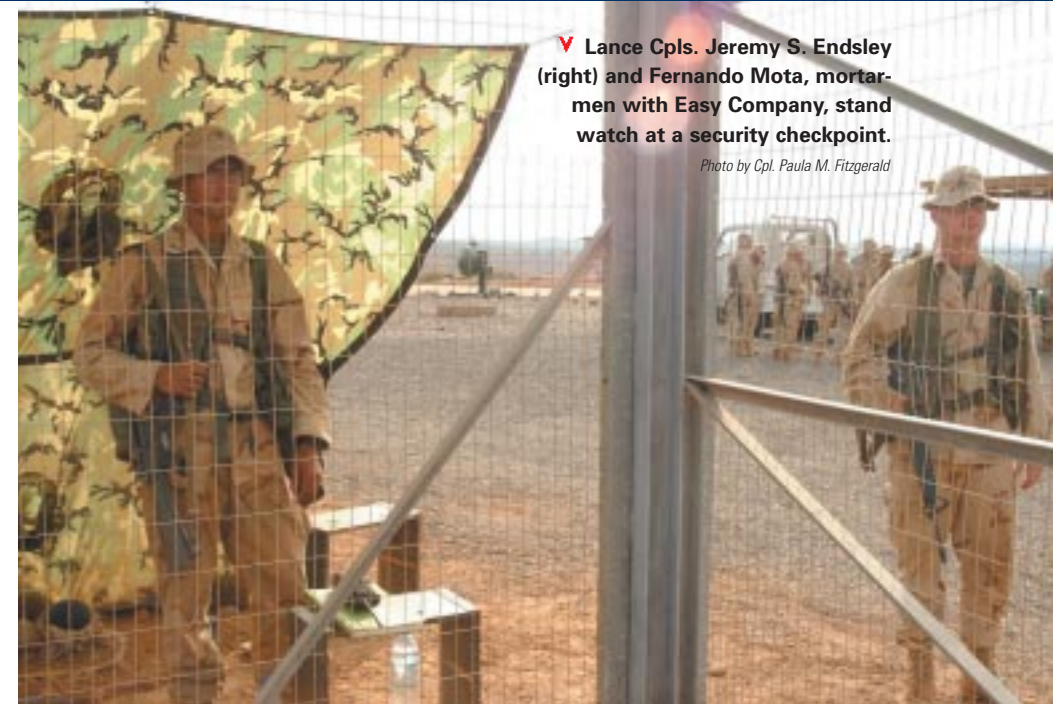
Even though the Marines of the platoon have various jobs, the mission remains the same.

On Christmas day, Lance Cpls. Jeremy S. Endsley and Fernando Mota, both mortarmen, were standing guard.



▼ Lance Cpls. Jeremy S. Endsley (right) and Fernando Mota, mortarmen with Easy Company, stand watch at a security checkpoint.

Photo by Cpl. Paula M. Fitzgerald



Large rocks, prickly trees and some wildlife are interspersed throughout the barren landscape where the Marines are working.

Endsley, of Kansas City, Mo., added, "Some people get bothered by spending the holidays out in a place like this, but I don't mind so much because I'm proud to be doing something to protect America's

freedoms."

According to Sgt. Anthony W. Gotwalt, squad leader, the Marines' responsibilities include conducting security patrols. That's where the combat engineers come into play.

"We help during patrols. If mines are encountered, we can sweep for them and clear the area," he explained. Although the threat of mines is limited, there is still the chance of encountering remnants of rebel uprisings that occurred in the early 90's.

When the 24th MEU (SOC) was training in Kosovo a few months ago, the combat engineers had a bit of scare.

"When we were sweeping for mines in Kosovo, we used a metal detector that

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◀ El Paso, Ill., native Sgt. Chad M. Witowski, 3rd squad leader and Javelin weapon system gunner for Easy Company, on patrol. Witowski was the first Marine to fire the Javelin on the East Coast.

Photo by Cpl. Paula M. Fitzgerald

"I'm proud to be doing something to protect America's freedoms."

Defending Freedom Abroad

Marines Engaged in America's Newest War

By Sgt. John Sayas
KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan



▲ Lance Cpl. Eric R. Evans, Syracuse, N.Y., native and Cpl. Ricard Defreitas, New York native, both switchboard operators with Tactical Air Operations Center, Marine Air Control Squadron 4, dig a trench to lay communication wire in Afghanistan. "My level of patriotism has greatly increased since 9/11, especially being from New York," Defreitas said. "Being here, I get the pride of being a Marine serving his country to the fullest." Evans echoed his comments, adding, "There is no place I'd rather be in a time like this." Photo by Sgt. John Sayas

With the sight of concertina wire surrounding many areas of the camp, and buildings filled with bullet holes, it remains clear to troops living here that they are in a very hostile environment.

Since the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and al-Qaeda, along with its senior leaders in hiding, American and allied troops have bivouacked here in the southern part of this war-torn country, while preparing for future attacks.

"We are well aware that we are in a combat situation," said Staff Sgt. Frederick A. Smith, communications chief, Marine Air Control Squadron 4, Marine Air Control Group 18. "The Marines know this is a real-world mission because they are carrying their weapons around with them at all times...we are always alert to our surroundings and what's going on."

Smith and the rest of his unit arrived here in November to replace fellow Marines of their detachment. This was part of a six-month deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The squadron, headquartered at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Okinawa, along with other air command and control agencies within MACG-18, has been deployed here and in Uzbekistan since April 2002 in support of America's war against terrorism.

With M16A2 service rifles by their sides, the Marines are prepared for any contingency. In the meantime, they have another mission that is critical to the success of daily operations being conducted here and surrounding areas of Afghanistan.

"Everybody pretty much knows why we are here. There isn't any question about that," said Staff Sgt. Robert L. Sidders, technical controller and Bell Fountain, Ohio native. "A lot of these

guys are getting their first chance to do something that makes a difference. Not just on any type of field operation, but on a real-world operation."

According to Smith, the Marines also spend a lot of time training on basic battle skills, equipment and how the unit functions during their mission. The training helps the Marines work together more proficiently and effectively while conducting operations here.

"We are not the actual element on the 'wire.' We're here in support of the Army and Air Force, so we have time for training classes on things such as leadership and Marine Corps Institute courses," Smith said. "We give classes on the equipment we have out here and how the whole operation works because we have other Marines from different units trying to gel with the MACS-4 unit. It's hard,

but as Marines, we learn to adapt and overcome."

Marines have also learned to adapt to the sometimes harsh conditions here. For some, it is their first time being in an environment where dust storms are a common occurrence, causing equipment to malfunction, and dealing with weather conditions which become extremely hot, or brutally cold. Others have adapted fairly well having been here before, or through training they received in some places like Twentynine Palms, Calif., and Yuma, Ariz.

"It is an interesting experience," said Lance Cpl. Eric C. Johnston, radar repairman, and St. Louis, Mo., native. "The living conditions are a lot better than the way they were when I was here the first time."

Some of the basic commodities the Marines have here, like cable, warm showers and hot meals, keep morale high. Letters of support and care packages filled with food and snacks, also help. Most importantly, they have learned to rely on one another to stay motivated and get back home safely.

"I have a bunch of great guys out here. They are truly outstanding Marines," Smith said. "I am very proud of the effort we are making and proud to be a part of Operation Enduring Freedom. I hope we get this operation done quickly, so that we can get everyone home to their families." **M**

◀ **Tactical Air Operations Center**
Marines replace many radar panels such as this one off the AN/TPS-59 Long Range Radar, during their six-month deployment in Afghanistan.

Photo by Sgt. John Sayas



Easy Company supports CJTF-HOA

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was sensitive to any kind of metal," said Gotwalt. "We came across something that we thought was a mine, but it turned out to be just be a coffee can."

Gotwalt, who hails from York, Penn., said that incident proved how seriously the Marines take their job.

"It's sometimes a tedious job, but we have to make sure the infantry, and follow on forces, can get through to the assault objective," explained Gotwalt.

If the Marines on patrol ever encounter an enemy vehicle, Sgt. Chad M. Witowski and his fellow hard chargers can lend a hand.

Witowski is a Javelin weapon system gunner. In fact, he was the first Marine to fire the system on the East Coast.

"The Javelin was designed to take out things like tanks. It's an awesome system," said the El Paso, Ill., native.

The Javelin system has a maximum range of 2,500 meters. The key feature of Javelin is the use of fire-and-forget technology that enables the gunner to fire and immediately take cover. Additionally, special features include the top attack or direct fire mode (for targets under cover), integrated day/night sight, advanced tandem warheads, imaging infrared seeker, target lock-on before launch and soft launch. Javelin can be fired safely from enclosures and covered fighting positions, according to an article on <http://www.defensedaily.com>.

Luckily, no hostile forces have been encountered, but if they are, the warriors from "Easy" Co. will be ready.

"I trust any of the Marines out here when it comes down to it," said Andryshak. "It doesn't matter if he's a private or a captain because I know with the utmost confidence that they will do their jobs. They are well trained." **M**

"Being here, I get the pride of being a Marine serving his country to the fullest."